

Federal Worker 2000

In July, President Clinton issued the five-year Federal Worker 2000 Presidential Initiative requiring Federal Agencies to reduce the number and severity of injuries in the Federal workforce. The growing number of injuries to Federal employees and the costs associated with them has led the President to take action.

President Clinton stated that “The Federal workforce is a valuable asset to our healthy economy. We need to do more to protect our dedicated public servants from preventable injuries and illnesses...” At NASA, we are leaders in safety and health within the Federal government, with one of the lowest accident rates and one of the most improved rates of workers’ compensation costs. But we cannot be complacent. As a team, it is our responsibility to ensure that our valued workforce is not put at risk for accident, injury or illness.

The President also charged all Federal Agencies to ensure “when injuries do occur, Federal employees are given the best possible care and are returned to work as quickly as possible.” It is up to us to help our fellow employees when injured. With our help we can restore them to health and bring them back to work. Accidents, big and small, and close calls, causing injury or not, must be investigated promptly. Remember our greatest asset, is your dedication, skills, and knowledge. NASA employees, their dedication, skills and knowledge are our greatest asset to the nation. When the President said “I want to make the safety and health of every Federal worker a central value in each operation performed in Federal workplaces”, he was calling upon us to take action through caring. At NASA, where safety and health are core values, we can accept no less than to be a world class leader in safety and health and show we care about one another.

NASA Actions

Principal Center

- Monitor and track trends in workers' compensation injuries and costs, and report data within the Agency to NASA management and centers
- Serve as liaison between Centers and Office of Workers' Compensation Programs and report Continuation of Pay costs
- Ensure that each Center has a program in place to investigate workers' compensation claims for causation and prevention of future accidents, ensure prompt health care, and a return to work policy that provides meaningful work
- Monitor and report on data for Agency compliance with Federal Worker 2000 program (excluding portions on numbers of injuries reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

NASA Centers

- Track and investigate all workers' compensation claim cases in the same manner as safety reportable accidents
- Provide for prompt medical treatment of injured workers. Occupational Health clinics will medically evaluate injured employees as quickly as possible
- Facilitate prompt filing of workers' compensation cases with Department of Labor and track timeliness of reporting
- Institute prompt return to work policies for injured employees, tailoring work for the medical restrictions due to the injury
- Report serious injuries and illnesses promptly to the Principal Center (i.e., injuries to multiple employees, injuries requiring hospitalization, and on-the-job deaths)
- Institute occupational health education promotion and prevention activities in conjunction with occupational safety efforts to reduce occupational injuries and illnesses

Background

The Federal Worker 2000 Presidential Initiative was signed on July 2, 1999 as a 5-year program with a goal of reducing the 160,000 annual workplace injuries, costing the U.S. Government \$1.9 Billion annually. During the next five years, agencies will reduce their overall occurrence of injuries by 3% per year, or maintain their rate if they are a designated "best performing" agency. Agencies will also strive to improve their timeliness of reporting by 5% per year and reduce the number of days spent away from work by 2% annually.

The majority (\$4.3M) of NASA's total Workers Compensation charges (\$6.2M) are for employees on long-term disability roles. Survivor death benefits account for another 17%, with medical charges at less than 8% of the total. Statistics show those employees off more than a year rarely return to work. Of those out for 4-6 months, less than half will return to work. NASA pays for these employees (75% of base salary tax free with annual cost of living) until death. Employees on long-term disability roles do not necessarily have conditions that would prohibit productive limited duty work.

NASA's current Return to Duty program consists of a Telecommuting program and flexible and part-time work schedules to accommodate varying needs from temporary disabilities to childcare needs. The Presidential Initiative reemphasizes Office of Workers Compensation Program regulations directing agencies to have policies in place to return employees to productive work as quickly as possible by enabling them to perform work in a specific alternate position or location, or to perform restricted or limited duties.